



Family Court Project

Marion County

Basic Information

Population:	918,977
County Seat:	Indianapolis
Judicial Officers:	83
Date of Project Implementation:	1/1/2002
Project Judge/s:	Judge Cynthia Ayers
Administrative Contact:	Mellisica K. Flippen
Project Funding:	\$40,000

Family Court Mission Statement

Please provide a mission statement for your Family Court Programming

The mission of the Marion County Family Court Project is to provide a comprehensive and coordinated process to handle multiple conflicts and justiciable issues involving a single family by providing coordination and continuity of services, thus maximizing family stability and judicial economy.

Family Court Programming

Please provide a description your Family Court Programming

The Marion County Family Court Project offers several programs through the Family Resource Center which opened in June of 2008. The center is located in Room W-125 of the City-County Building. Mellisica Flippen is the Family Court Coordinator for Marion County Superior and Circuit Court. The center provides a variety of legal and social services that coordinate and promote judicial efficiency, including: locating an attorney, low or no cost mediation, early case management and triage, referrals for domestic violence and anger management counseling, substance abuse evaluation and treatment, education and housing assistance options, parenting-time facilitation, and self-represented litigant workshops for divorce filers. The center also has public computers available for self-represented litigants to access the Indiana Supreme Court Self-Represented Legal Center and to view instructional and informational videos detailing the mediation process. Additionally, brochures are available on a number of topics and center staff has access to a number of service referral guides for a myriad of other services.

Legal Information Site Coordinator: (Natalie Henderson – Service Referral Case Manager)

The Marion County Family Court Project employs a full-time case manager that is responsible for a variety of tasks to support the functions of the center. The case manager works with families that have multiple cases in multiple courts within Marion County. Court-- referred litigants are also

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assessed to determine their issues and needs. Upon completion of the assessment, the case manager makes the appropriate recommendations and appointments for service referral to providers in Marion and surrounding counties. The case manager also assists litigants in meeting the requirements set forth in court orders and is responsible for following up with service providers and filing reports indicating the litigant's progress for the court.

Early Alternative Dispute Resolution: (Mediation Assessments)

Marion County Superior Court has been conducting Mediation Assessments for self-represented litigants since January of 2011. Since its inception the program has garnered the praise of participating judicial officers and court staff for its speed and efficiency in helping self-represented litigants navigate the court system. Initially, three courts participated in the pilot program. The program's success has led to the addition of five courts for a total of eight courts now participating in mediation assessments. Litigants are randomly assigned to courts that participate in mediation assessment upon the initiation of their divorce filing. During the mediation assessment the court determines issues suitable for mediation. If the court determines that mediation is appropriate, the parties are sent to the Family Resource Center to view a video regarding the mediation process and to meet with the Coordinator to be scheduled for mediation.

Parenting Time Assistance: (Jerry Peyton – Access Program Case Manager)

The Access program is offered free of charge to litigants who are unable to resolve disputes regarding parenting time. The case manager meets with litigants referred by the courts, attorneys, and those who voluntarily request assistance with resolving their visitation issues. Most litigants referred by the court are seen immediately following court hearings or within a week of referral. Walk-in litigants are seen immediately on a limited basis depending on the availability of the case manager.

Pro Bono Referrals:

The Marion County Superior Court Family Court Project works with the Indianapolis Bar Association and Heartland Pro Bono Council to obtain legal representation for indigent and low income litigants needing assistance.

Family Law Self Help Center: (Marion County Pro Se Workshop for Divorce Filers)

In November 2011, the Marion Superior Court initiated a workshop for self-represented divorce filers. Working in partnership with the Robert H. McKinney School of Law and Indianapolis Bar Association, the Court recruited Project Supervisors and volunteers to assist self-represented litigants with the initiation of their divorce filing. The Court also partnered with Marion County Community Correction to obtain space to host weekly workshops. The workshop is offered to litigants of Marion County that meet strict financial eligibility standards established by the federal government (i.e., those that live at or below 150% of the federal poverty line) and do not have liquid assets or own substantial property. During the workshop, project volunteers (law students) facilitate the session. Participants are not provided legal advice during the workshop. The divorce packets used by litigants are acquired from the Indiana Supreme Court Self-Service website. Project volunteers review the documents for completion, spelling, and signatures. Members of the Indianapolis Bar Association serve as project supervisors to the project volunteers. Upon completion of the workshop litigants are instructed to proceed to the Family Resource Center in the City-County Building to file their divorce petitions.

Early Case Management/Triage:

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Triage service procedures were developed to avoid fragmented and duplicated services within Marion County Superior and Circuit Courts, and to promote the delivery of efficient and effective services to families. Triage intake screenings are conducted by center and Domestic Relations Counseling Bureau staff upon referral from the Court. Litigants are assessed to determine which service(s) would be most appropriate for their case. The following are services offered and provided to litigants upon completion of the intake screen: mediation, service referral, brief focused and comprehensive evaluation. Litigants are free to begin the services recommended at any time following the intake screen. A copy of the results of the intake screen is forwarded to the court and can become an order for services at the discretion of the court.

Number of Families Served

Please provide an estimate of the number of families served through the Family Court Programming

Since its inception in 2002 the Marion County Family Court Project has served 7553 families.